



North Carolina Division of Parks and Recreation

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Michael F. Easley  
Governor

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William G. Ross Jr.  
Secretary, DENR

## NEW PROJECTS GET PARTF SHARE

The Parks and Recreation Authority in October made substantial commitments to new state park projects including the eastern segment of the Mountains-to-Sea Trail, Haw River State Park and Mayo River State Park.

In allocating trust fund revenues to land acquisition, the authority set aside \$2.1 million each to the two new state park projects authorized last year by the General Assembly. And, \$1 million in capital funds was earmarked to help establish portions of the trail system in the east.

In requesting the funds for the Mountains-to-Sea Trail segment from Falls Lake to the coast, Division Director Phil McKnelly said, "Our primary goal is to help local governments in that area be successful. But, there will be places where the parks system will need to come in and fill gaps."

The authority is charged with distributing the trust fund, which derives revenue from the state's

### ***BALANCE IS CHALLENGE, SUPERINTENDENTS TOLD***

A significant challenge for the state parks system in coming years will be balancing land acquisition at existing parks with efforts to establish new parks and protect important resources as natural areas.

That was one of the messages Phil McKnelly, director of the Division of Parks and Recreation gave park superintendents at their 53<sup>rd</sup> annual conference in November.

A combination of factors, including the potential sale of land by corporate interests, could offer the system important opportunities in coming

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*MAYO RIVER CORRIDOR IS A POTENTIAL STATE PARK.*

tax on real estate deed transfers. By law, 30 percent of the fund is directed to local governments through grants for recreation projects, and five percent is dedicated to coastal beach access.

The remaining 65 percent is used for state park capital improvements and land acquisition. Since the fund was established in 1994, more than \$65 million has been set aside for capital improvements in state parks, compared to \$36 million spent from 1916, when the first state park was established, until 1994.

More than 13,000 acres have been added to the parks or to the inventory of preserved natural areas.

Projects to establish new state parks on the Mayo River and upper Haw River are the first efforts in the division's New Parks for a New Century initiative.

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# ***RHINEHART TAKES HELM AT LAKE NORMAN***

Casey Rhinehart, a veteran ranger at Lake Norman State Park, has been promoted to superintendent of the park. He replaces Jud Burns who was promoted to south district superintendent in August.

Rhinehart has worked at the park in Iredell County for more than 13 years. A native of Gaston County, he attended Southpoint High School in Belmont and graduated in 1988

from North Carolina State University with a bachelor's degree in recreation resource administration.

Rhinehart worked as a seasonal employee at the Great Smoky Mountains National Park, the Clemmons Educational State Forest and Crowders Mountain State Park before joining the division full time. He worked for more than a year at Jordan Lake State

Recreation Area before joining the staff at Lake Norman. He is certified in advanced law enforcement and as an environmental educator.



He and his wife Jill have two children, Kinsey, 8, and Nicholas, 5.

In announcing the promotion, Walt Gravley, west district superintendent, said, "Casey has worked hard over the past 17 years. His last 13 years of experience helping to operate Lake Norman State Park, along with his dedication to division goals, will be a great benefit to us all. I look forward with confidence as Casey takes on the new role of superintendent."

Rhinehart said that one of his goals, as superintendent, is to get the park more involved in the local community. "We're also looking forward to seeing the completion of the park's new swimming area and, one of my big personal and professional interests is seeing all phases completed of our 12-mile mountain bicycle trail system,"

## **From The Director's Desk**

Dear fellow employees:

Almost all of us have come to expect at least a bit of a mental break at this time of year. Spending some extra time with family and friends and turning our attention to familiar holiday activities offers a chance to reflect on what's most important in our lives and to recharge our batteries.

In a way, that's no less true of an organization such as this division. In coming weeks, we'll be reflecting on what our accomplishments have been in the past months and on what types of challenges are in store for us in the year ahead. Every person in this division has had a hand in those accomplishments (and, the list is impressive). For that, you have my gratitude. In the same fashion, every person's talents and commitment will be needed as we face the new challenges that undoubtedly lie in front of us.

It's been a somewhat hectic and challenging time for our parks system recently, so yes, we can all use a breather. Enjoy the season. Take full advantage of the time with family and friends. My best holiday wishes to each of you.

Sincerely,

***Phil***

Philip K. McKnelly

## **HAPPY HOLIDAYS**

**FROM *THE STEWARD***

**AND, THANKS FOR  
ALL THE GREAT STO-  
RIES, PHOTOS AND  
IDEAS THIS YEAR.**



# VOLUNTEERS TACKLE CROWDERS TRAIL

Crowders Mountain State Park will attempt to harness the energy of volunteers to build a trail all the way into the next state.

The park's staff has been training volunteer coordinators to lead weekend work teams to clear and grade a 7-mile trail to link the park's core area with Kings Mountain State and Kings Mountain National Military parks in South Carolina. The trail would traverse a 2,000-acre land bridge acquired in 2000.

"Because the acquisition of this property was so highly visible, we had people starting to come in afterwards saying, 'I'd like to help with that trail,'" said park superintendent Joe Sox. "We realized at that point we had a good labor source."

Sox began keeping volunteer applications on file and waiting for the time, as hiring restrictions eased, when he would have the staff to manage the volunteer pool that has grown to about 60.

Earlier this year, the park hired two additional staffers dedicated to the new property. Ranger Scott Coffman is the principal volunteer coordinator, aided by ranger Mike Britton and maintenance mechanic Chuck Kline.

The first 2,000 feet of trail has been completed as an eagle scout's project.

Sox said it could likely be some time before the rest of the trail could be contracted using capital improvement funds, and many of his park visitors are itching to begin hiking the property that follows the ridgeline of the Kings Mountain range. Using volunteers will still be a slow



*VOLUNTEERS WORK ON WHAT WILL ULTIMATELY BE A 7-MILE RIDGE TRAIL.*

process, he said, but work can begin right away and volunteers get a chance to become stakeholders in the park's future.

And, the potential cost savings are substantial. Estimates for new trail construction now range from \$60,000 to \$80,000 per mile.

"We're looking at a project we suspect is going to take two years. We're looking at seven miles of trail and not all of it is on the best of land," Sox said.

The concept of using volunteers for such a large-scale project, he said, "is new to us, too. It's just like anything else, it's going to be a learning process for us."

The key to success, Sox said, is to find competent and committed volunteer crew leaders. The park's staff was delighted to find eight, so far, willing to spend one or two weekends a month supervising crews of up to 10 people.

Each crew leader will

come to the park during the workweek to talk to rangers and maintenance staffers about work that needs to be done on Saturdays, Sundays and Mondays. If all goes well, the crews will need minimal supervision by park staff during the weekends, when the workload is heaviest in the park.

Some of the crew leaders suggested Monday workdays, he said. "We'll be trying to use the volunteers as efficiently as we can. We don't want them coming out and standing around."

Completion of the trail will tie together a common trail system of more than 45 miles for long-range hiking in Gaston and Cleveland counties in North Carolina and York County in South Carolina.

"This will be hard work," Sox said. "People need to be in good physical condition and willing to work as a team. But, it's something they can look back on and say, 'I helped do that.'"



# ISABEL . . .

## PETTIGREW STATE PARK

*With the help of Superintendent Sid Shearin, right, Pettigrew State Park has always been known for its impressive trees. On Sept. 18, Isabel left a more damaging mark there than any hurricane in recent memory, according to the Roanoke Beacon. Winds were measured at 105 mph, just before the park's wind gauge – along with a portion of the park office roof – blew away. This massive cherrybark oak, estimated at about 110 years old, fell into the Pettigrew family cemetery. "Oh, it's still impressive. It's just that they're so much prettier standing up," Shearin said. (Photo courtesy of Roanoke Beacon.)*



## MERCHANTS MILLPOND STATE PARK

*There was plenty of tree damage at the "pond" in Gates County, but a more onerous job was trying to clean up a massive fish kill that followed the storm. Volunteers from five parks were out in canoes a week after the hurricane collecting an estimated 15,000 fish in one day, and there were plenty more to be had. Nonetheless, the park was able to reopen its canoe access on Nov. 1.*



## WILLIAM B. UMSTEAD STATE PARK

*Even at the outer edges of its path in the eastern Piedmont, Isabel made quite an impression. This group of hikers poses beside the enormous root ball of an upturned hardwood at Umstead. Hurricane damage resulted in facilities and trails being closed at Eno River, Falls Lake and Medoc Mountain as well.*



# FLYTRAP SEARCH TURNS UP RARE SUNDEW

Superintendent Greg Schneider and intern Justin Barnes of Jones Lake State Park were searching the park for the rare Venus flytrap when they located an even more uncommon insectivorous plant.

Early this fall, Schneider and Barnes slogged through calf-deep mud and thickets of briar and tangled brush to a spot they considered highly likely to contain the flytrap. Their destination was a wet, power-line meadow where vegetation had been mechanically trimmed for years, and where a recent controlled burn had pushed back the thick growth of bay tree, pond pines and shrubs.

During the trek, the pair was heartened by the presence of bladderworts and yellow pitcher plants, often found in the same habitat as the flytrap. Upon an exhaustive search at their destination, however, no Venus flytraps were to be found.

However, Schneider and Barnes were rewarded for their efforts when they found several threadleaf sundews (*Drosera filiformis*) glistening in the sun.

The Natural Heritage Program lists the

## STATE SET TO CLOSE ON ENO PARK LAND

In January, the state will close on the 815-acre Eno Wilderness property, a six-year project that will result in the largest single acquisition ever for Eno River State Park.

The original 1977 Master Plan for the park specified 287 acres of the Eno Wilderness property in the acquisition plan. In 1997, the Division of Parks and Recreation reviewed this acquisition plan through the General Management Plan process. As a result, the division opted to add several thousand acres to the acquisition plan for several reasons, most notably increased knowledge of what is needed to protect the natural and cultural resources while providing land for recreation.

Where possible, property was added to provide for a wider river corridor for both wildlife and park users. Besides the Eno Wilderness, major additions to the acquisition plan include additional river frontage upstream of the Lawrence Road river crossing and additional property in the Buckwater Creek drainage.

The acquisition will add some significant resources to the park including more than two miles of frontage along the Eno and two tributaries, acres of upland hardwood natural communities and about five miles of existing roads usable as trails.

The division first contacted the owners in



*BARNES, LEFT, SCHNEIDER FOUND THREADLEAF SUNDEW.*

threadleaf sundew as significantly rare, known from fewer than five populations in North Carolina. The colony at Jones Lake is the only known population within the state parks system.

Though more numerous in states further south, the species is at the periphery of its range in southeastern North Carolina. It has only been found in Bladen, Columbus and Sampson counties during the past 25 years.

early 1998, and later that year, got permission to have the property appraised. During those early contacts, both parties agreed to keep negotiations private until an agreement could be reached. This meant the division could not publicly seek funding until the deal was in place in early 2002.

The total necessary funding is \$6.89 million to cover land cost and associated expenses. Several state and federal grant programs, as well as the Eno River Association contributed to make the project successful. The first funding received was \$50,000 from the Eno River Association, which proved critical in leveraging other grants. Next was \$1,207,808 from the Parks and Recreation Trust Fund to provide a match for a request to the Federal Land and Water Conservation Fund. Over two fiscal years, \$1,588,794 was received from LWCF. In December 2002, we applied for Clean Water Management Trust Fund assistance for the riparian buffer. However, the Ecosystem Enhancement Program (DOT wetlands mitigation) will cover the cost of the riparian buffer at \$2,318,400. The Clean Water Management Trust Fund will cover the transactional costs up to \$46,500. The Natural Heritage Trust Fund Board awarded two grants totaling \$1,681,000 in 2003.

The NC Council of State approved the project for acquisition in November.

# TRUST FUND

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

tive, which has identified 13 potential new state park sites in the state, one potential new state recreation area and 33 potential new state natural areas that would be set aside for preservation.

The General Assembly's authorization of the parks allows the division to develop a land acquisition strategy and approach willing sellers.

McKnelly told the authority members that, due to the potential for large corporate land divestment in the state, additional new projects are "in the wings in a meeting of opportunity and planning."

Other projects approved by the authority at its quarterly meeting include small-acreage boundary tracts at Jockey's Ridge, Stone Mountain and William B. Umstead state parks and at Weymouth Woods State Natural Area.

The authority approved capital projects totaling \$12.48 million. The largest project is \$3.5 million to complete development of the US 220 Access at New River State Park to include a visitor's center, exhibits, tent-and-trailer campground, picnic shelter and maintenance facilities.

The project list also includes a network of boat docks and fee stations at Kerr Lake State Recreation Area; trail improvements at Mount Mitchell, Crowders Mountain and Hanging Rock state parks; and, extensive repairs to facilities at Pilot Mountain, Morrow Mountain and Lake Norman state parks and at Falls Lake State Recreation Area.

In another development, the authority agreed to seek a rule change to raise the maximum grant to local government projects from \$250,000 to \$500,000.

More applicants are seeking the maximum amount with projects being larger in scope, McKnelly told the authority. Local governments must match the trust fund grant dollar-for-dollar, but many are committing even more local funds, he said.

If approved by the State Rules Review Commission, the change would take effect in the 2004-05 funding cycle.

Since 1997, the authority has awarded more than \$48 million for local recreation projects to 317 governments in 96 counties.

# SUPERINTENDENTS

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

months, McKnelly said. That coincides with the division's New Parks for a New Century initiative, which has identified 47 areas in the state as potential new state park units. Those include 13 potential state parks, a recreation area and 34 potential natural areas to help protect the state's natural diversity.

Also, there have been several local initiatives to establish new state parks, including efforts by citizen groups near the Haw and Mayo rivers, McKnelly told the superintendents.

"We've got people around this state that are seeing state parks as something desirable for their communities and something they want in their area. I think that's a good thing," he said.

But, existing parks also need attention. Several need important land acquisitions to fulfill their potential for recreation or preservation, he said.

The principal source for funding is the Parks and Recreation Trust Fund which last year set aside \$5.4 million for land acquisition and \$12.6 million for capital improvement projects in the parks.

McKnelly noted that this year marks the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the first-ever parks bond referendum in North Carolina, which earmarked \$35 million for land and capital projects. The trust fund was established the following year.

Between 1916, when the first state park was established, and 1993, total expenditures for capital projects and land acquisition were \$77 million. Since that time, bond revenues and the trust fund contributed \$139.6 million.

Lewis Ledford, superintendent of state parks, told the group that despite shortages in staff caused by budget reductions and hiring freezes, the state parks have continued to operate at a high level of service. That hard work has resulted in credibility with the public at the grassroots level, he said.

"We've been through difficult times in state parks. We've dodged some bullets and taken cuts of several hundred thousand dollars. You've worked hard through it all, and I appreciate all you're doing," he told the superintendents.

Through the last couple of years, the division has averaged more than 30 vacancies in a workforce of about 410. In the midst of hiring freezes prompted by budget emergencies, the division had more than 50 vacancies.

Twelve rangers resigned in the past year, said Chief Ranger Tom Jackson, most of them moving to jobs with higher salaries. The resignations represent a loss of more than \$150,000 in hiring and training costs, he said.

# NORTH CAROLINA STATE PARKS MONTHLY ATTENDANCE REPORT 2003

PARK	OCTOBER 2003	TOTAL YTD. OCT. 2003	OCTOBER 2002	TOTAL YTD OCT. 2002	% CHANGE (2002/2003)	
					OCT.	YTD
CAROLINA BEACH	21,299	226,549	19,406	215,293	10%	5%
CLIFFS OF THE NEUSE	7,279	107,702	10,010	127,834	-27%	-16%
CROWDER'S MOUNTAIN	25,281	178,509	22,074	251,666	15%	-29%
ENO RIVER	22,694	241,961	24,027	264,708	-6%	-9%
OCCONEECHEE MOUNTAIN	4,319	25,472	3,129	29,722	38%	-14%
FALLS LAKE	59,225	636,138	48,731	973,481	22%	-35%
FORT FISHER	32,399	684,551	60,534	933,395	-46%	-27%
FORT MACON	90,704	1,160,088	85,298	1,205,682	6%	-4%
GOOSE CREEK	10,072	106,137	9,936	121,024	1%	-12%
GORGES	9,258	81,629	13,925	143,776	-34%	-43%
HAMMOCKS BEACH	10,221	137,592	17,100	170,308	-40%	-19%
HANGING ROCK	40,779	332,286	29,461	355,309	38%	-6%
JOCKEY'S RIDGE	57,145	978,513	71,829	918,495	-20%	7%
JONES LAKE	7,672	109,150	7,246	96,300	6%	13%
JORDAN LAKE	66,544	711,314	153,182	1,502,940	-57%	-53%
KERR LAKE	72,240	1,167,140	68,508	1,496,888	5%	-22%
LAKE JAMES	29,086	228,112	10,171	238,900	186%	-5%
LAKE NORMAN	35,907	331,396	29,694	340,799	21%	-3%
LAKE WACCAMAW	5,098	81,026	6,140	91,740	-17%	-12%
LUMBER RIVER	5,530	44,536	6,475	47,170	-15%	-6%
MEDOC MOUNTAIN	5,196	38,929	7,004	64,279	-26%	-39%
MERCHANT'S MILLPOND *	0	133,140	7,768	80,933	-100%	65%
MORROW MOUNTAIN	18,770	231,148	34,740	375,060	-46%	-38%
MOUNT JEFFERSON	11,894	88,199	11,727	87,730	1%	1%
MOUNT MITCHELL	148,710	630,257	85,226	521,921	74%	21%
NEW RIVER	18,955	145,826	19,652	143,769	-4%	1%
PETTIGREW	3,288	76,290	6,347	72,921	-48%	5%
PILOT MOUNTAIN	47,739	342,471	37,380	338,576	28%	1%
RAVEN ROCK	10,340	92,544	8,381	98,148	23%	-6%
SINGLETERY LAKE	1,547	20,712	480	15,079	222%	37%
SOUTH MOUNTAINS	17,742	161,942	15,576	145,825	14%	11%
STONE MOUNTAIN	45,752	286,312	45,929	414,089	0%	-31%
WEYMOUTH WOODS	4,287	27,571	2,601	24,394	65%	13%
WILLIAM B. UMSTEAD	39,159	361,182	34,498	351,413	14%	3%
<b>SYSTEMWIDE TOTAL</b>	<b>986,131</b>	<b>10,206,324</b>	<b>1,014,185</b>	<b>12,259,567</b>	<b>-3%</b>	<b>-17%</b>

# Mission

The mission of the North Carolina  
Division of Parks & Recreation is:

to protect North Carolina's natural diversity;

to provide and promote outdoor recreation  
opportunities throughout North Carolina;

*and*

to exemplify and encourage good steward-  
ship of North Carolina's natural resources

for all citizens and visitors of North  
Carolina.

## ***SAFETY ZONE***

**Brighten holidays  
the safe way**

✓Be bright about holiday  
celebrations; always use  
a designated driver.

✓Check holiday lights for  
frayed or worn wires and  
cracked sockets and  
plugs.

✓Never use candles to  
decorate a tree.

✓Place candles on firm  
surface and away from  
napkins, drapes,  
greenery or other  
flammable materials.



### *The Steward*

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